



Lake Burton 2005



Lake Burton is a 76-acre impoundment located in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. This reservoir is owned by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and is managed primarily for fisheries related activities. The only facilities available at this reservoir are a boat ramp and associated parking. Bank fishing is allowed and there is a narrow strip of land that extends around the entire shoreline that can be utilized by bank anglers. The lake is open to fishing 24 hours a day. Outboard motors are prohibited but electric motor use is permitted.

The reservoir was impounded in 1950 and was stocked with various species of sportfish such as largemouth bass, bluegill, and catfish. Lake Burton is an impoundment of Tomahawk Creek and contains a number of fish species that were not originally stocked. These species either were in Tomahawk Creek prior to impoundment or were stocked by anglers. Carp, suckers, and gizzard shad currently dominate the fishery. Small impoundments such as Lake Burton typically do not benefit from these species because they cause the sport fish populations to become unbalanced. Carp and suckers tend to keep water muddy while gizzard shad contribute to stunted sunfish populations.

Largemouth bass abundance is low due to poor recruitment. The abundance of crappie, bluegill, carp, and suckers may be preventing adequate spawning success or fish survival of young largemouth bass. The largemouth bass are growing well from the abundance of forage. The average size of adult bass in 2001 and 2004 was 14½ inches and the largest was approximately 8 pounds. These fish reach 17 inches at age 5. Largemouth bass were most abundant between the boat ramp and the dam where water depths are generally more favorable.

Lake Burton is now regulated with a 'trophy' largemouth bass regulation. A new 22-inch minimum size limit and one fish creel limit, for largemouth bass, was initiated in February of 2005. The new regulation is an attempt to create a trophy bass lake by protecting the limited number of fast growing largemouth bass in the population. Limiting the amount of harvest of largemouth bass is necessary to maintain a trophy fishery. A largemouth bass stocking program was also initiated in 2004 to improve the number of bass in the population since reproduction has been very poor for many years.

White crappie are the dominant crappie species at Lake Burton. White crappie prefer turbid water for optimum reproduction and will usually outnumber black crappie in turbid lakes. Crappie in this lake are abundant but grow very poorly. For good growth, crappie must convert primarily to a fish diet by the time they reach 6-7 inches. Since these fish appear to be too abundant, their growth stops when they reach seven inches. It is very common for crappie to be overabundant and stop growing at this size. When this happens they do not die from lack of food, they just stop growing. There were only 2

crappie collected over 8 inches in the 2001 sample. Only a few black crappie were collected and the largest was 7 inches.

Bluegill are also very abundant. The overabundant bluegill population is likely a result of reduced predation from the lack of largemouth bass and the abundance of other small fish. Adequate predation from largemouth bass is needed to maintain healthy sunfish populations. In addition, gizzard shad and carp can compete directly for the same forage as bluegill. Most bluegill at Lake Burton do not exceed 6 inches.

Turbid water and an abundance of undesirable fish species have resulted in an unbalanced fishery. The only highlight to this fishery is the size of the largemouth bass. However, these fish are not abundant and may be hard to catch due to the large quantity of forage.

This reservoir is located west of Chatham and can be accessed by taking one of two routes. From Rt. 40 turn left onto Rt. 799 then turn right onto 649 at Climax then turn then turn left onto Rt. 750 and then turn right onto Rt. 800 and the lake entrance will be on your left. Coming in on Rt. 57 from Climax turn right onto Rt. 750 and then turn left onto Rt. 800 and the lake entrance will be on your left.